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HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year ending

DECEMBER 31ST, 1941.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

Medical Officer of Health:

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SAMUEL T. GUNNING, Cert. S.I.E.B., F.S.I.A.
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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH for the year ending DECEMBER 31ST, 1941.

To the Chairman and Members of the Council.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I submit the following Report for the period 1st January to December 31st, 1941, which is a condensed summary of the conditions affecting health, and has been drawn up in accordance with the latest instructions received from the Ministry of Health, as a result of which, some of the particulars which it has been usual to publish, have been withheld. These, however, are available should they be required.

Section A.

Statistics and Social Conditions of the District.

Area (in acres)	82,559.
Residential Population. (Registrar General's figure)... ...	24,380.
Number of inhabited houses.	6,539.
Rateable value	£100,302.
Sum represented by a penny rate ..	£ 398
Number of parishes in district....	34.

The population figure again shows an increase over that of last year, when the figure given was 21,740. This may, in part, be accounted for by the increasing number of evacuees and refugees in the district as the result of enemy action.

Vital Statistics.

Births.

Legitimate -	Male, 150;	Female, 133)	Total:
Illegitimate-	Male, 3;	Female, 6)	292.
			Birth-rate, 11·9.

Deaths.

Male, 129; Female, 159. Total - 288. Death-rate, 11·8.

Deaths of Infants under one year.

Legitimate -	Male, 8;	Female, 0)	Total:
Illegitimate-	Male, 0;	Female, 0)	8.

Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 births) = ~~23.~~ 27

Still Births.

Legitimate -	Male, 2;	Female, 2)	Total:
Illegitimate-	Male, 0;	Female, 1)	5.

Still Birth-rate ·2.

For purposes of comparison, the rate for the smaller towns of England and Wales are given:-

Birth-rate	16·4
Death-rate	13·0
Infant Mortality rate ...	56.
Still-birth-rate	·6

The death-rate is low and so is the infant mortality figure but the birth-rate and death-rate are much too close and if persisted in, will later on imply a declining and ageing population which will bring all kinds of social burdens in its train.

The chief causes of death were as follows:-

Tuberculosis	8.
Influenza	11.
Malignant disease	37.
Pulmonary disease	38.
Circulatory disease	118.
Infant diarrhoea	1.
Infant deaths	7.

There were no deaths from ordinary infections or maternal causes.

Infectious Disease.

The following cases were notified:-

Cerebro Spinal Fever	1.
Chickenpox	25.
Conjunctivitis	1.
Diphtheria	3.
Measles	348.
Meningitis	3.
Pneumonia	14.
Puerperal Fever	1.
Puerperal Pyrexia	4.
Scarlet Fever	9.
Scarlatina	1.
Tuberculosis	21.
Whooping Cough	81.
Total.	512.

Fortunately most of the cases notified were mild.

The epidemic of Measles which was referred to in my last report continued with increasing severity at the commencement of the year. It will be noted that the number notified for the whole year was 348, against 128 for the previous year, and that the total comparable figures for the two years is 512 against 312 for the previous year. The scarlet fever and diphtheria cases were treated at the North Herts. Isolation Hospital.

A successful immunisation campaign against Diphtheria was carried out during the year and in some of the villages the numbers inoculated came to about 100%. The work was done largely by the practising doctors with the help of the nurses. This method which was carried out with the help of the Council, was, I am sure, the right way of approach though it may have meant a little more trouble. It enlisted co-operation among all parties with the Public Health Authorities and will, I hope, ensure continuation of the work in the proper way.

The extension of communal dinners in the villages and schools has been a feature of the year. This, together with the milk scheme, has meant better nutrition and health in those partaking of the food and I can hardly imagine a measure more fruitful of social well-being.

The School Medical Inspections have been continued and have shown satisfactory results.

Whilst a certain percentage of evacuees returned home during the year, these have been replaced in the form of others who have made private arrangements for accommodation in the district and also a number who have taken up work of national importance in the district.

Section B.

General Provision of Health Services.

1. Public Health Officials:

(a) Medical.

The Medical Officer of Health is a part-time Officer holding a Diploma in Public Health. He is also Medical Officer of Health for Hitchin Urban and Royston Urban Districts; is Assistant School Medical Officer for the County and Medical Superintendent of the Isolation Hospital.

(b) Sanitary.

The Senior Sanitary Inspector holds the Certificate of the Sanitary Inspectors' Examination Board (London) 1920, including the qualification as an Inspector of Meat and other foods.

The Additional Sanitary Inspector holds the Certificate of the Sanitary Inspectors' Examination (Joint) Board and also the Certificate of the R.S.I. as an Inspector of Meat and other foods.

(c) Clerical. - Miss M.D.E. Sayer.

Laboratory facilities, Hospital facilities, etc.

There are no changes or developments in these services to record during the year. The position therefore remains as stated in my previous report.

Section C.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Water Supplies.

The district is well supplied with water, 31 of the 34 parishes having a piped supply; Hexton, Caldecote and Radwell representing the three exceptions.

There is no material alteration in the sources of supply to that outlined in my previous report.

The Supply at Hexton is continuing to give cause for concern owing to the constant unsatisfactory bacteriological reports on the available supply to the inhabitants. Necessary precautions are constantly being taken to ensure that the water is boiled before being used for drinking purposes and check samples are taken at regular intervals.

Examination of Supplies.

In pursuance of the system of examination of water supplies reported on last year:-

(3) samples were taken and submitted for full Bacteriological and Chemical Examination.

(67) samples taken and submitted for Bacteriological Examination only.

Of these, 61 were entirely satisfactory.

Sewage and Sewage Disposal.

No extension of sewers were undertaken during the year and it is with some satisfaction I record that the constant and vigilant attention given to the existing sewers and sewage works by the Surveyor and his Staff, has enabled them to cope adequately- if not always to their complete satisfaction - with the gradually increasing volume of sewage.

Public Cleansing, Refuse Collection Disposal and Salvage.

These services have again been carried out in a satisfactory manner, though refuse collection has to a certain degree, been subordinated to salvage. As the salvage has become more important, the quantity available for collection has been reduced. This has necessitated increasing vigilance on the part of the refuse collection and salvage staff to retrieve every possible article of salvage. Also it has been necessary to appoint an additional man to enable the work to be properly carried out.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

In perusing the information supplied by your Sanitary Inspectors, you will recognize that this aspect of the work continues to receive the constant and careful attention of this department, despite conditions prevailing at the present time, and that the various matters directly associated with Public

Health and Housing, have claimed a good share of the Inspectors' time.

The figures supplied are as follows:-

Total number of inspections for all purposes - 3,011.

Divided as follows:-

For defects under the Housing Acts.	245.
For defects under the Factory and Workshop Acts.	86.
For the prevention of Infectious Disease. ...	167.
As to the Sanitary Condition of Schools & Public (Halls.	33
Inspections under the Milk & Dairies Order ...	439.
Inspections of slaughter-houses, butchers shops, etc.)	201.
For the prevention of Nuisances...	333.
Inspections of drainage, conversions, etc. ...	229.
Inspections of water supplies and sampling. ...	165.
Supervision of Refuse Collection and Disposal.	343.
Supervision of Salvage	401.
Inspections re Rats and Mice Destruction. ...	31.
Inspections under Shops Act, 1934.	27.
Unclassified (A.R.P., Food Decontamination, etc.)	311.

Section D.

Housing.

Whilst it is realised that routine house to house inspection under the Housing Act, is adversely affected by hostilities, nevertheless a good share of work of repair has been undertaken to dwelling-houses by informal action, following visits of inspection on complaint and otherwise. No formal actions were taken under Sections 6 to 11 of the Housing Acts.

From the progress returns compiled by the Surveyor, I find that only 10 private dwelling-houses were erected or completed during the year under review and all by private enterprise, while the following Sanitary Improvements were undertaken in existing dwelling-houses:-

Re-drainage.	8.
Sanitary improvements, including drainage.	21.
Other improvements and alterations.. ...	30.

Since completion of the re-conditioning of the three cottages under the Housing (Rural Workers) Act in the earlier part of the year, no applications have been received, and re-conditioning under this Act is practically at a standstill owing to war conditions.

Section E.

Inspection and Supervision of Food.

Milk Supply.

It is satisfactory to report that regular inspections of all Cowsheds in the district have been made, as not only does this ensure cleanliness in milk production being maintained, but also that a wholesome milk reaches the consumer. The standard of production, generally, continues to improve and although shortage of labour still presents one of our great difficulties at the present time, cleanliness in production is a predominating favtor which is continually being stressed by both employer and employee.

Of the 156 Registered Producers in the district, 37 are licenced for the production of Accredited Milk and 12 for the production of T.T. Milk. Samples of these products are taken at regular intervals by the County Council and the results communicated to this Department.

Meat and other Foods.

All occasional slaughtering under licences by the Food Control Department and emergency slaughtering, continue to be checked by the Inspectors, after receipt of notices from the Food Control Office, and in so doing the conditions at the 16 slaughter-houses are maintained up to standard although these are not all now in regular use.

An inspection of all Bakehouses and other Food Stores, including Vans for the delivery of food, has been made and defects noted and measures to remedy these defects effected on informal notice only.

Tuberculosis Regulations.

Table of New Cases and Mortality for the year.

Age Periods.	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Respiratory.		Non-Respiratory.		Respiratory.		Non-Respiratory.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0- 1.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1- 5.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5-15.	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
15-25.	-	5	-	-	-	1	-	-
25-35.	2	1	-	-	2	1	-	-
35-45.	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	-
45-55.	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
55-65. and over.	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Totals.	8	10	2	1	3	3	-	-

It will be observed that 21 New Cases of Tuberculosis were reported during the year (including 3 transferred from Danger Area) as against 16 in 1940. It is again pleasing to report that 4 patients suffering from Tuberculosis were reported cured.

Conclusion.

For the third year of the war period and as stated at the commencement of this report, at the request of the Ministry this report is submitted to you in an abstract form as a measure of precaution and having regard to the fact that a great portion of the efforts of the Council, Committees and Officers are continually being directed to the matters of Civil Defence.

I am, however, pleased to be able to again report that the

health of the district continues to be satisfactory and in many cases shows signs of improvement in spite of the strain to which the services are subjected as the result of increased population due to war conditions, and I would again express my sincere appreciation of the goodwill and co-operation extended to me from all Members of the Council and Staff in matters affecting the welfare of all residents in the Hitchin Rural District.

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) NORMAN MACFADYEN.

Medical Officer of Health.

8th July 1942.